**UBD Chapter Responses**

**Chapter 1**

The first chapter of this book focused on the definition of the two phrases in the title; differentiated instruction and understanding by design. From my understanding, differentiated instruction is the depth of knowledge that we as teachers have and need. If we do not have the knowledge in our subject, we can’t expect to successfully pass it on to our students. In social studies this is extremely important. We can’t just teach our students about the dates of the battles and treaties of World War II, they need more of the big picture instead of the little details. We need to understand the factors leading up to the war, the ideology of each nation that helped cause the war, the leaders of each nation, and the aftermath of the war on top of the generic dates if we want our students to fully understand World War II. The second definition in this chapter is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction focuses on the differences in student learning habits; it also focuses on the who, where, and how we teach. This is very important to teaching in general because we need to understand that all students learn differently. If we assume all students learn the same, then the students that enjoy the one teaching style will love my teaching, but I will lose every other student. As teachers, we need vary our teaching styles for each subject to help us hit every student’s learning needs; no teacher can play favorites and assume their other students are inadequate because they don’t respond to one teaching style.

**Chapter 2**

The greatest idea I got out of this chapter is that you need to have a balance between your ability to teach and your knowledge in a subject. Yes, it is possible for you to be very good in both, but this is not the case most of the time. But it is very detrimental if you only excel in one area. If you excel in your knowledge of a subject but can’t teach very well, then you know everything you need to, but you can’t articulate it well to your students. If you are like this, students can’t learn because they don’t understand the material the way you present it. If you have a very good ability to teach but lack the basic knowledge of the subject, then you have nothing for which you can offer your students academically. Yes, you will have the ability to make great relationships with them, but you will not be fulfilling your primary purpose as a teacher: actually teaching them. The other idea I found intriguing is that it suggests that you can’t address the needs of all your students during the beginning of a lesson plan, you must go address them along the way. There is some truth to this. You should make a general lesson plan that aims to help put the most amount of different learners, but it’s hard to hit all of them. Instead of stressing about that, you should try and help them on the fly when a problem occurs. It’s like what professor Theresa told us, class rooms are like improv theater; you need to be able to think and act on your toes.

**Chapter 3**

This chapter started to tie together backwards design and differentiated learning. In the chapter, it explained the three steps to backward design, and then went on to explain where differentiated learning can be used at each step. But over all, this chapter focused on how teaches should focus more on the big idea when designing a unit, having the smaller details filled in along the way. I couldn’t agree more with this. I am personally someone who likes to read something and then think of it as a big picture rather than a large group of small details. It’s hard to see through the forest when you get caught up in the leaves. In this case we need to focus on the larger ideas for our students to fully understand the smaller one. I found it interesting that if we were to take 30 minutes of instructional time for all of the benchmarks stated by Robert Marzano and John Kendall, then it would take an additional nine years of schooling for a student to learn all of them. This is because some standards are way too narrow, and in my opinion, they should be broadened. Many American and Canadian textbooks also have too many standards, trying to make the most bang for their buck. But this is why teachers who try to teach to the textbook fail. I personally never liked the teachers that felt they were restricted to the textbook. In those classes, I felt that I didn’t need the teacher at all, all I needed was the textbook because it had all of the information.

**Abstract**  
This chapter talked about what really matters when it comes to teaching, and then went on to talk about [backward design](http://edglossary.org/backward-design/). In general, one should teach the overarching ideas of their subject, with the smaller facts and details supporting the overarching ideas. If a teacher wants their students to learn these ideas, an effective method of planning is by fallowing the three step backward design model. The first step is figuring out the desired results. What do you want your students to be able to do/understand by the end of your unit? The second step is to determine what is acceptable evidence of this understanding. How and how often will you assess your students understanding of the material? The third and final step is to plan your actual lessons. What kind of lessons will you create to get you major ideas across?

**Synthesis**  
For the most part, everyone talked about two thing s that connect well together: backward [planning](http://tll.mit.edu/help/what-strategic-teaching) and that teachers should focus on the overarching ideas of their content. For the most part most of my classmates were saying that it is very important to point out the large ideas and what you expect of your students throughout the course. Many people really liked the backward design model because it gave you a concrete strategy to work with when it comes to making a curriculum.

**Chapter 4**

The major idea I got out of this chapter is that teachers need to have clarity. If a teacher has little to no clarity, then students will not understand what they are trying to teach. If a teacher can’t teach, then they are failing their students at their major role. The most important part of this chapter in my opinion is the section where it names the nine attitudes and skills of a teacher. The two most important of those two is that a teacher needs to accept responsibility for their learner’s success, but the learner also needs to accept responsibility for their learning as well. It forms a partnership where the teacher and student must work together to further the student’s educational success. I’ve always thought that education is a two-way street, both the teacher and the students have to care and want to learn. The teacher, in my opinion, should foster a student’s willingness and want to learn and provide the tools they need to learn. These tools aren’t always the same for all students, so teachers need to be ready to offer various ways to teach. A student should then be ready and willing to accept what a teacher has to offer. Students should work to foster their desire to learn with the help of their teachers. If one side of this relationship doesn’t care, then the whole thing will fall apart. In the future, I want to be the teacher that gives every student a chance. I can’t rely on other teacher’s explanations of students; I need to find my own opinion of them.

**Chapter 5**

This chapter in general talked about assessment. I personally enjoyed looking at the 3 different principles of assessment, agreeing with all of them for the most part. The first principle is to consider it as more of a photo album rather than a snap shot. For the most part, a photo album consists of many different snap shots overtime. This is how tests should be taken. You have to look at the tests overtime, rather than individually. If you look at them individually then you miss the over all improvement you might see. You have to take it one step at a time. If they fail the first test, you can’t panic. You need to see where they went wrong, try and help them improve on those areas, and then see how they do on the next test. If there is an upward trend when it comes to assessment, then a teacher is doing their job well. The second principle is to match the measures with the goals. The analogy that I had gotten the most out of out of this section was the one comparing testing and teaching to coaching. In sports, your coaches have you do drills to prepare you for a game. In teaching, we do the same thing. Our lessons are our drills, and then the “games” are our tests. One could also think of it that we are teaching kids to be in the real world. Our drills could be preparing them for the real game, that is the real world.